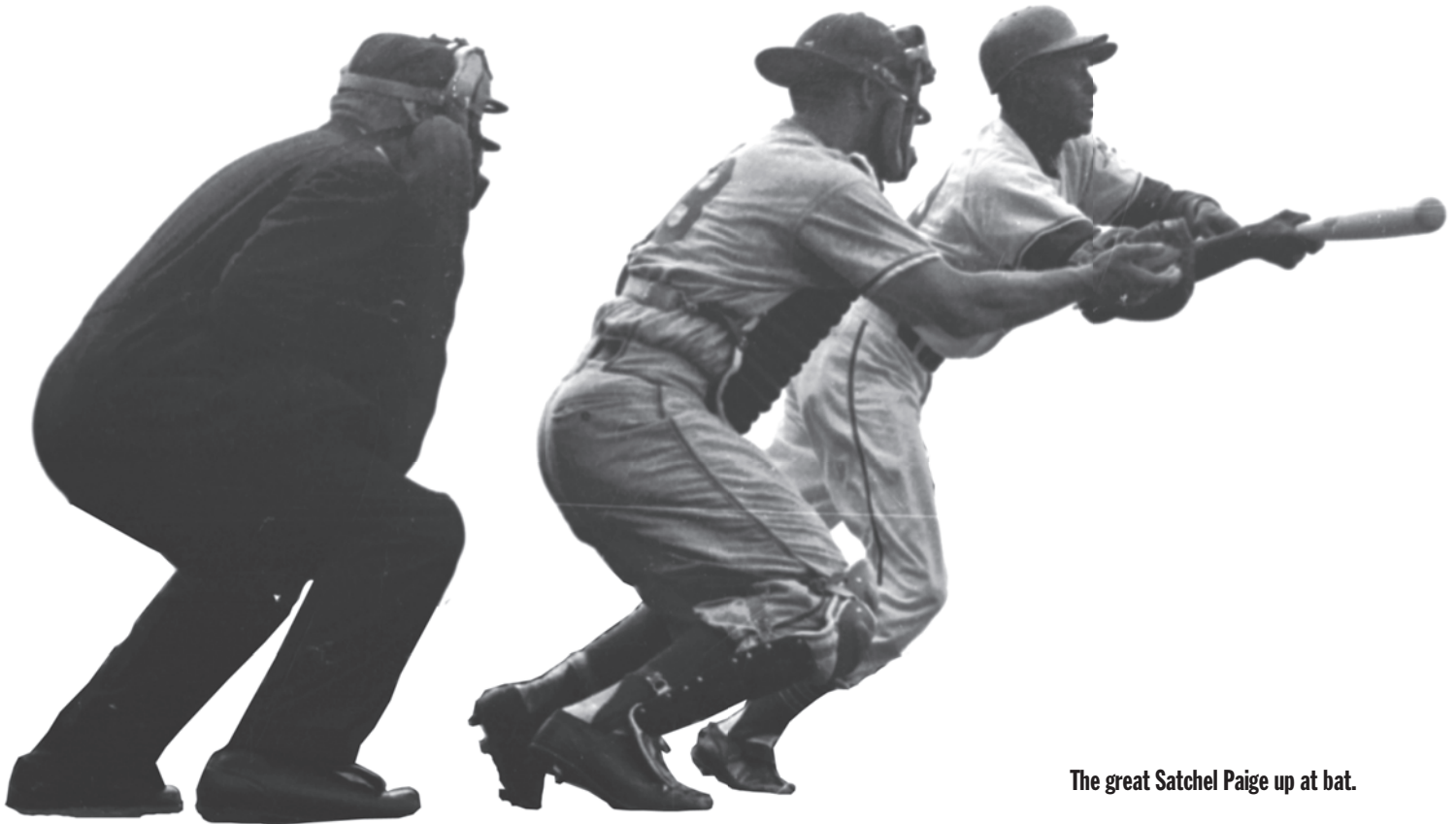


THE NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUES

The old bus rattled into town. The players knew that their day was not yet over. They had to find a restaurant and a hotel. But they could not go just anywhere. They were African Americans, and many places would not serve them.

Until Jackie Robinson became a Dodger in 1947, black baseball players had to play on all-black teams, separated by the prejudice of managers, other players, and fans.

The first black game was played in 1860. By 1920, professional black



The great Satchel Paige up at bat.

teams formed the Negro National League, organized by Andrew (Rube) Foster.

Players spent a lot of time barnstorming (traveling to other cities to play ball). Going to a game was a big social event, where people dressed up and families went together to the baseball field. They came to see Bullet Joe Rogan throw his fastball and Cool Papa Bell steal bases and Mule Suttles hit homers.

The games of the Negro Leagues were usually not reported in white newspapers. But the African American press covered them enthusiastically. Everyone wanted to read about Buck Leonard, champion batter and fielder. Or powerful Josh Gibson, whose home runs thrilled the crowd. Or Satchel Paige, one of the most famous pitchers of all time.

Even after baseball was integrated, the best Negro Leagues players were still not recognized in baseball's Hall of Fame. Finally, in

1971, Satchel Paige was selected by a special committee on the Negro Baseball Leagues.

One of the premier Negro Leagues teams was the Kansas City Monarchs, where Jackie Robinson played. They won championships from the 1920s through the 1950s. Today Kansas City is the home of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, the only museum dedicated solely to the Negro Leagues and their players. Here you can see the gloves and shin guards the players wore, look at lockers displaying the Hall of Famers' uniforms, and stand in a baseball diamond complete with lighting, sound, and 11 life-size statues of some of the famous players.

Adapted from an article by Mary Northrup

**Visit the Negro Leagues Museum at
1616 E. 18th Street,
Kansas City, Missouri 64108.
Phone 816-221-1920.
Or visit on-line at www.nlbm.com.**

